

1664-1686. Slavery in British America

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, New York City is one of the major cities of the world. It is home to over 8 million people, some of the major corporations in the world and the United Nations. But in the 17th century, the settlement that would become New York City teetered on the brink of survival. For the Dutch, who established New Amsterdam as the first permanent European settlement in the area, the port and the lands surrounding it were a minor part of a global trade empire that was centered in Holland and had spokes extending to East Asia, Africa, Brazil and the Caribbean. The New Netherland colony itself included part of the present day states of New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, and Maryland and the West Indies island of Curacao.

Unlike Brazil and the Caribbean where sugar was an extremely valuable staple crop, the northern part of the Dutch New World territories were seen as of great economic value. The Dutch West Indies Company that coordinated the operation of the colony was unable to attract sufficient settlers to make the venture successful and after twenty-five years, it generally sent only two ships a year to New Amsterdam. Because of its isolation, it was run in an autocratic way by its governor and a small group of local merchants. Many residents actually welcomed the British force that overthrew Dutch rule.

In August, 1664, a small British expedition that consisted of four ships and 2,000 soldiers arrived in Brooklyn and demanded that Peter Stuyvesant, the Dutch governor, surrender the colony. On September 8, 1664, the control shifted from the Dutch West Indies Company to James Stuart, the Duke of York. In the Treaty of Breda in 1667, the Dutch officially recognized British sovereignty in what was now known as New York in exchange for Dutch control over Surinam on the northern coast of South America. Fragmentary documents from the early years of British control give historians a small glimpse into conditions for enslaved and free Africans in early New York.

1664. Proclamation by Duke of York

No Christian shall be kept in bond slavery, villenage, or captivity, except such who shall be judged thereunto by authority, or such as willingly have sold or shall themselves, in which case a record of such servitude shall be entered in the court of sessions held for the jurisdiction where such masters shall inhabit, provided that nothing in the law contained shall be to the prejudice of master or dame who have or shall by any indenture or covenant take apprentices for term of years, or other servants for term of years or life.

Source: Craig Steven Wilder (2000). *A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn*. New York: Columbia University, 15.

1664. Terms of Sale of Negroes

Source: E. Donnan (1932/1969). *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*. NY: Octagon, v. III, 427-428.

[Conditions and Terms on which the Director General and] Council of [New Netherland] propose [to sell to the] highest bidder a lot of Negroes and Ne[gresses]. 29 May, 1664.]

The buyers shall immediately take possession of their purchased negroes, and may use them as bond slaves, and also sell them to others.

But whereas, the meaning of the directors is, to promote and advance the population and agriculture of this province more and more, the purchased negroes or negresses shall not be sold, carried away or transported beyond this province. Who so acts contrary hereunto, shall forfeit for each negro or negress, One hundred Guilders, beaver value.

Payment shall be made, one fourth part down, the remainder in September or October next, in good beaver at eight guilders the skin, or in merchandize, beaver price, or in provisions such as the Hon'ble Company may require, to be delivered here at the Mannhattans at the following prices:

Wheat at 55 stivers, Pease at 50 stivers, Rye at 45 stivers, the skepel.

Salted beef at 4 stivers Pork at 5 stivers, the pound

The purchaser shall be bound to give sufficient security. On the foregoing Conditions, the following were the purchasers:

Jacobus Backer	1 Negro, for	Florins 555
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	1 Negress, 1 Negro,	305 315
Dom'e Johannes Theodorus, Polhemius on Colonists' Account,	one Negro for	440
Nicolas Verleth, on Colonists Account	1 Negress, for 1 Negro, 1 Negress and child, 1 Negress,	290 395 360 260
Johannes Verveelen	1 Negro	445
Paulus Leendertsen Vande Grist	1 Negro	425
Capt. Thomas Willet	1 Negro	502
Timotheus Gabry	1 Negro	485
Mr. John Laurence	1 Negro	345
Jerominus Ebbingh	1 Negro	485
Isaacq Fooreest	1 Negro	545
Jacob Leyseler	1 Negro	615
Nicolaes De Meyer	1 Negro	460
Daniel Terneur	1 Negro	465
Isaac Bedlo	1 Negro	430
Jacques Cousseau	1 Negress ditto ditto	335 305 300
Willem Maerschcalck	1 Negro ditto	500 425
Govert Loocquermans	1 Negress	305
Egbert Myndersten	1 Negro	562
Adriaen Vincent	1 Negress	255
Carel Verbrugge	1 Negress 1 Negro	300 600

1676. Sir John Werden To William Dyer, 30th Of November, 1676

. . . Secondly the deputy govern'r of the R'll Company tells me that that Company only pretend to the first empcion [importation] or transportacion of Negroes out of Guiny, and when they are once sold in Barbadoes, Jamaica etc. by them or their factors, they care not whither they are transported from thence; for the more are carryed of, the more againe wilbe wanting; and therefore you need not suspect the Company will oppose the introduceing of black Slaves into New Yorke from any place (except from Guiny) if they were first sold m that place by the Royall Company or their agents.

Source: E. Donnan (1932/1969). *Documents Illustrative of the History of the History of the Slave Trade to America*. NY: Octagon, v. III, 435.

1678. Governor Andros responds to Questions about the Colony

Source: E.B. O'Callaghan, ed. (1856). *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York; Procured in Holland, England and France*. Albany, NY: Weeds, Parsons, v. 3, p. 261.

Our Merchants are not many but with inhabitants & planters about 2000, able to bear arms, old inhabitants of the place or of England, except in & near New York of Dutch Extraction & some few of all nations, but few Servants, much wanted & but very few slaves.

No persons whatever are to come from any place but according to act of Parliament which the magistrates and officers of the several towes or places are to take care of, accordingly the plantacôn is these late years increased but

no General account hath been taken so is not known how much nor what persons. Some few slaves are sometimes brought from Barbadoes, most for Provisions and should about a £30 or £35 Country pay

1685. Order In Council On Captain Billop's Appeal.

Source: E. Donnan (1932/1969). *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*. NY: Octagon, v. III, 435.

At the Court at WHITEHALL the 23d of December 1685.

Present: The Kings most Excellent Majesty in Council.

Upon readings Report from the Right Hon'ble the Lords of the Committee for Trade and Plantations in the words following

May it please Your Majesty, In obedience to your Majesty's Order in Council of the 4th of December 1685. Wee have examined the petition of Captain Christopher Bullop complaining that having consigned from Nevis some Negroes and other Goods to Mr. John Injohns of New York, the said Negroes and Goods or the effects of them were attached at New York by Mr. John West Attorney to John Bawden and others of London where the said West obtained Judgem't against the Pet'r for eleaven hundred and forty pounds Sterl.; from which sentence or Judgement the said Injohns desired to Appeal, which was refused; And therefore praying that the Mayor of New York may bee ordered to stop all proceedings there, and to send over an Appeal for a final determination before your Majesty. Whereupon wee most humbly Offer our Opinion that your Majesty bee pleased to admit the pet'rs appeal before Your Ma'ty in Council from the said sentence in such manner as is desired by the pet'r within four months after notice given of your Ma'ty's pleasure; the pet'r having first given security here for the summ of Two Thousand Pounds to your Majesty to bee levied upon the Petitioner's Estate both Real and Personal, as well on your Ma'ty's province of New York in America, as in England or elsewhere, to answer such determination in his said appeal as your Majesty in Council shall award. And that in the mean time all proceedings against the said Billop in relation to this matter doe cease. All which is most humbly submitted. His Majesty in Council the same, and being graciously pleased to admit of the pet'rs Appeal hath this day thought fit to Order That the matter of the said appeal bee, and the same is hereby appointed to bee heard before His Ma'ty in Council within four months after notice hereof shall bee given to the Mayor of New York, who is to transmit to this Board an account of all proceedings in his Court relating thereunto. And it is further ordered that in the mean time all Proceedings against the said Capt: Billop or his Agent relating to this matter doe cease; Hee having this day given security here, according to the Report, to answer such Determination in the Appeal, as His Majesty in Council Shall award. Whereof the said Mayor of New York, or the Mayor thereof for the time being and all others concerned are to take notice, and give obedience hereunto. And Colonel Thomas Dungan His Ma'ty's Governor of New York is hereby directed to take care and give order that all things bee performed accordingly.

1686. Instructions to Governor Dongan

Source: E.B. O'Callaghan, ed. (1856). *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York; Procured in Holland, England and France*. Albany, NY: Weeds, Parsons, v. 3, p. 374

You are to give all due encouragement & invitation to Merchants & others who shall bring Trade unto Our said Province, or any way contribute to the advantage thereof; And in particular to ye Royal African Company of England.

And you are to take care that there bee noe Trading from ye Province of New York to any place in Africa within the Charter of the Royal African Compa. And you are not to suffer any ships to bee sent thither without their leaue or Authority.

You shall pass a Law for the Restraining of Inhuman Severitys which by all masters or overseers may bee used toward their Christian servants, or slaves, wherein provision is to be made that ye willful killing of Indians & Negroes may bee punished with death, And that a fit penalty bee imposed for the maiming of them.

You are alsoe with ye assistance of Our Council to find out the best means to facilitate & encourage the Conversion of Negroes & Indians to the Christian Religion.

1686. Governor Dongan's Report on the State of the Province

Source: E.B. O'Callaghan, ed. (1856). *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York; Procured in Holland, England and France*. Albany, NY: Weeds, Parsons, v. 3, p. 415

To the five and Twentieth

It is the endeavor of all p'sons here to bring up their Children & servants in that opinion which themselves profess; but this I observe that they take no care of the conversion of their Slaves

Every Town & County are obliged to maintain their own poor, which makes the bee soe careful that noe Vagabonds, Beggars, nor Idle Persons are suffered to live here

But as for the Kings natural-born-subjects that live on long Island & other parts of Government I find it a hard task to make them pay their Ministers

Tho Dongan